

Six Tips to Control Stress

People deal with stress in many different ways. But we can all reduce the impact of stress by reacting appropriately and taking simple steps to counter its effects.

1. Lead a Balanced Life

Allow time for personal, leisure and family activities – as well as work. One response to job stress is to work longer hours. We try to control our stress by doing it all ourselves, bringing work home and not delegating tasks. This may be a rational short-term solution to a particular problem, but it limits the time available for relaxation, rest and relationships. Long term, this approach only compounds stress.

2. Eat Well and Exercise

Good nutrition and regular exercise are important for effective stress management. We can physically work off stress by exercising, or ease stress with relaxation techniques like deep breathing and yoga. These not only actively reduce stress: when we feel good physically it's easier to deal with stressful situations. Avoiding smoking and heavy drinking as a quick fix will also help you cope with stress.

3. Manage Your Time Efficiently

Begin your day by organizing your work and setting priorities. Write down goals and break the large tasks down into smaller, manageable ones. This provides a sense of achievement once the tasks are complete. Be realistic and flexible in the way you schedule time: recognize your limitations and allow time for the unexpected.

4. Keep Your Sense of Humor

Recent studies show that laughter, and even the anticipation of laughter, can lighten moods. It may be difficult to see the funny side of stressful situations when you're in a crisis, but taking time to watch a funny movie or have a laugh with friends can be a great stress antidote.

5. Give Yourself a Break

We all need a break now and then. Taking a vacation (or even just planning one) can reduce stress. Develop the self-awareness to recognize when you really need a break, whether it's a walk round the block or a week on a sunny beach. And when you go, leave your work behind.

6. Recognize What You Can and Can't Control

People who feel in control of their lives are less prone to stress. But recognize that there will always be things we can't fully control – like a downturn in the economy or a sudden illness. Finding a balance between wanting to control everything and having no control at all is an important part of managing stress.

No one is immune from stress, and with the increasing demands on our fast-paced lives, stress is at an all time high. But if we can't avoid stress altogether, we can recognize it early and respond in ways that reduce its impact.

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